

**Testimony in support of HB479 -Improving Access to Healthy School Meals**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Mary Stein. I am here on behalf of Anderson School, District 41 in Bozeman where I serve as a School Board Trustee.

I am here as a proponent of House Bill 479.

As a trustee of this K-8 school district, I put great value on a solid school foodservice program that provides the students with access to nutritious food during the school day. Being well-nourished is one of the basic foundation stones that must be in place in order for a child to learn.

At Anderson School, we recently began our own foodservice program, but have very limited kitchen facilities. We are committed to offering the children nutritious lunches that will support not only their daily performance at school, but will also support their long term health and their ability to make healthy lifestyle choices as they become more and more independent.

Allocating funds from the already overstretched general fund budget toward improving our foodservice facilities is next to impossible. In addition, grant funds rarely allow for capital improvements, thus another avenue toward improving our kitchen is not accessible.

Our board adopted a School Wellness Policy last summer and in doing this, has made a commitment toward maintaining a school environment that supports the health of our students. A solid school foodservice program is the cornerstone to the implementation of this federally mandated policy.

House Bill 479 in allowing for one-time funding of \$5,000 to 50 Montana schools, can help districts, like ours, buy the equipment and materials necessary for a healthy foodservice program. Please support this important bill – there is no question in my mind that it is good for children's health and it is good for children's academic outcome in school.

Mr. Chairman, a copy of my comments are being submitted to you. Thank you for your time.

*Respectfully submitted by Mary Stein, School Board Trustee, Anderson School District #41, Bozeman, Montana. Phone: 406-587-7726 Email: [mstein2848@yahoo.com](mailto:mstein2848@yahoo.com)*